



Southeastern Idaho News

BANNOCK, BEAR LAKE, BINGHAM, CARIBOU, FRANKLIN, ONEIDA & POWER COUNTIES

WELCOME SCOTT HOBDEY

This month's article about southeastern Idaho comes from Scott Hobdey, the new regional economist for southeastern Idaho. He is a veteran Idaho Commerce & Labor unemployment insurance tax representative with 18 years experience in the department's Unemployment Insurance Division, stationed in Pocatello.

Before that, he was a cost accountant for the J.R. Simplot Co. in southeastern Idaho and then an assistant athletic director at Idaho State University.

An Army veteran, Hobdey has a master's degree in business administration from Idaho State University.

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ECONOMIC TRENDS

The labor force and total employment remain in sync for the Pocatello metropolitan area. The rate of unemployment in September was about the same as last year as the number of jobs gradually increased in line with the number of workers looking for jobs. The drop in metropolitan unemployment rate from 4.1 percent in August to 3.7 percent in September occurred as a large food manufacturer resumed operations after a maintenance shutdown and a call center increased its number of employees. Nearly 300 manufacturing jobs in the area were more precisely identified in the latest report, separating them into durable and nondurable sectors. That will permit better tracking and assessment of manufacturing in the region as it evolves. Manufacturing jobs, typically higher paying than service-sector jobs, are in high demand, and it is not likely that there will be a decrease in the overall manufacturing occupations in the near term. The decline in government jobs in education reflects the publicized reduction in students and, subsequently, staff at the area's secondary schools. The enrollment decline at Idaho State University – a re-

Southeastern Idaho Table 1: Pocatello MSA Labor Force & Employment Bannock and Power counties

	Sep 2006*	Aug 2006	Sep 2005	% Change From Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
Seasonally Adjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	46,180	45,950	45,460	0.5	1.6
Unemployment	1,700	1,870	1,670	-9.1	1.8
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.7	4.1	3.7		
Total Employment	44,480	44,080	43,790	0.9	1.6
Unadjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	45,570	44,630	44,710	2.1	1.9
Unemployment	1,410	1,720	1,380	-18.0	2.2
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.1	3.9	3.1		
Total Employment	44,160	42,910	43,330	2.9	1.9
JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs** - NAICS	40,520	39,280	39,500	3.2	2.6
Goods-Producing Industries	6,160	6,170	5,810	-0.2	6.0
Natural Resources & Mining	30	30	30	0.0	0.0
Construction	2,740	2,770	2,390	-1.1	14.6
Manufacturing	3,390	3,370	3,390	0.6	0.0
Food Manufacturing	1,120	1,000	980	12.0	14.3
Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	170	160	150	6.3	13.3
Machinery Manufacturing	220	230	90	-4.3	144.4
Other Manufacturing	1,880	1,980	2,170	-5.1	-13.4
Service-Providing Industries	34,360	33,110	33,690	3.8	2.0
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	7,650	7,660	7,450	-0.1	2.7
Wholesale Trade	1,390	1,390	1,340	0.0	3.7
Retail Trade	4,780	4,790	4,640	-0.2	3.0
Utilities	40	50	50	-20.0	-20.0
Transportation & Warehousing	1,440	1,430	1,420	0.7	1.4
Information	760	770	770	-1.3	-1.3
Financial Activities	2,160	2,140	2,110	0.9	2.4
Professional & Business Services	5,210	5,090	4,890	2.4	6.5
Educational & Health Services	3,470	3,410	3,350	1.8	3.6
Leisure & Hospitality	3,430	3,460	3,480	-0.9	-1.4
Other Services	1,230	1,220	1,190	0.8	3.4
Government Education	5,750	4,100	5,910	40.2	-2.7
Government Administration	4,700	5,260	4,540	-10.6	3.5

*Preliminary Estimate

**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

sponse to the strong employment market throughout much of Idaho – has not affected positions at the school yet but may in the future, depending on the Legislature's response to that and other developments.

SPECIAL TOPIC: Promoting a Healthy Work Force

Most employers thinking about relocating to southeastern Idaho have done their due diligence and recognize the high quality of the area's work force, and part of that reflects worker health. A healthy work force directly impacts an employer's cost of operations because there is less absenteeism, better decisions on the job, better time management, lower training cost because turnover is reduced and possibly lower insur-

ance premiums for both the employer and employee. Indirectly the employer and workers also benefit from good health because it fosters a positive outlook on life and increased job satisfaction.

Good health is important to the residents of southeastern Idaho, reflected in the many opportunities for free or reduced-fee health services and education. Each week there are features in every local newspaper and on radio and television informing consumers and workers of health issues and the importance of maintaining good health. Many pharmacies and local health care facilities offer reduced-cost screening for diabetes, blood pressure reading and wellness counseling. Health fairs offering reduced-price cholesterol screening and body fat measurements are being sponsored nearly every week in some part of the area. Idaho State University continues to offer many opportunities for the public to hear from nationally recognized speakers about current health concerns and developments.

The employer community is also concerned about having a healthy work force and has been offering more in terms of health insurance. A 2005 study of fringe benefits offered by Idaho employers found about three of every four employees in professional services, manufacturing, public administration, utilities, education, real estate and mining had access to health plans. In a second tier, over half the employees in finance, transportation, health and social services, construction, information and other services were offered coverage.

There is a healthy work force in Idaho, and the health care providers and communities in this area are working hard to make sure it stays that way.

COUNTY NEWS

Franklin County

- The Cache Valley Transit Bus system began operation this month, funded primarily by the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality. It is an experiment in reducing air pollution in the valley believed to be caused largely by approximately 1,700 cars traveling back and forth across the Utah border each day. There will be two buses making trips from the Preston area to Logan area each morning and returning from Logan each evening.
- Residents were saddened by the closing of the Grand Theater and Cultural Arts Center. The facility is owned by the county and is more commonly known as the Worm Creek Opera House. It has served the residents of the area for several generations, but recent concerns about safety and needed repairs led to the decision to close the facility until a solution is found. The County Commission and the Theater Arts Council have been discussing the cost. There appears to be agreement on the need for repairs but

not on how to pay for them. Estimates of the cost for restoration range from \$15,000 to \$200,000.

- Dr. Rex Wortham closed his medical practice at the end of September. Franklin County Medical Center administrators began an immediate search for a replacement, hoping that medical staff from Pocatello and Logan can fill the void until a new physician is hired.
- Twenty-eight building permits were issued in Franklin County during the first six months of the year compared to 29 issued during the same period last year. But while the permits were evenly divided between the city of Preston and the rest of the county last year, only a third of them this year have been in the city.
- Two new area businesses opened in October. The Antique Mall just off Highway 91 is home to a new restaurant operated by Evey Storts. Off the Trax features Italian cuisine and is open six days a week. Daniel Baker began a new investment business, Edward Jones Investments.

Bingham and Power Counties

- Bingham County commissioners deliberated for three hours before awarding Rulon Jones, former NFL standout, a special use permit to operate a shooter bull elk range. The permit is conditional and requires Jones to build a double fence around the property and comply with other safety requirements. Shooter bull operations are a point of controversy, but there is no debate that they will generate money in the county and local area. Most hunts will involve flights into the area and overnight stays for several individuals.
- A new mortgage business opened in downtown Blackfoot. Hometown Mortgage is owned by Troy Eppich. It offers a variety of financing products including 100 percent investment property loans.
- Kaylynn Gorder opened the Downtown Bread Co. in Blackfoot and is selling 90 to 100 loaves a day in addition to sandwiches, soups, salads and sweets.
- Bingham Coop office staff moved into their new 4000-square-foot office, expanding to handle a new customer base. Chief Executive Officer Mike Dance recognized the need to serve a more urban customer in addition to the strong base of farmers and ranchers Bingham Coop has always served.
- University of Idaho Research and Extension soil scientist Pamela Hutchinson conducted a tour of a five-acre green-manure field trial on the Fort Hall Reservation. These trial plots were planted after the harvest of summer grown crops with quick growing

green-manure crops including mustards, oilseed radish and arugula. The crops were chopped and tilled back into the soil to improve the physical, chemical and biological properties of each test plot. It is also hoped that this method of renewing the soils will reduce pest and insect problems in subsequent year's potato crops.

- Local accountant Dallas Clinger has assumed the duties as chief executive of Harms Memorial Hospital in American Falls. Clinger, a lifelong resident of Power County, wants the hospital to be financially sound as it grows to meet community needs.
- The city of Aberdeen thrives during the busy harvest time, but city leaders are concerned about safety and road conditions with more than 15,000 trucks traveling through the city between September and January. The city was awarded a \$45,000 grant for Idaho Department of Transportation to study the situation.
- Fall harvest has gone as well as can be expected. Soft white wheat is about \$4 a bushel and hard wheat is averaging well above \$5 a bushel. It is expected that potato prices will hold above \$5 a hundred pounds this fall. Most of the harvest is complete, and there were very few weather delays until moisture at the end of October slowed the final days of field work

Bear Lake and Caribou Counties

- Work has started on an eight-to-12 home subdivision north of Montpelier. The property was recently annexed by the city and will be the site for an affordable housing project promoted by Southeastern Idaho Community Action Agency and the city of Montpelier. Home buyers in this subdivision may be able to work off part of the construction costs and in the process build equity and pride of home ownership.
- Funding of the Bear Lake/Oregon Trail Scenic Byway Management Plan remains an issue, and more studies will be done before any funding is committed by anyone. Dave Grierson of the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands emphasized the importance of working together to develop a single management plan for lake use and maintenance.
- Quest Communications has announced that high-speed Internet service is now available in Soda Springs. The high-speed access is up to 89 times faster than dial-up. The company believes high-speed access will encourage more customers to subscribe.
- The Soda Springs Chamber of Commerce welcomed a new business to the community. Herbal Lounge, owned by Michael and Paulette Anderson, special-

izes in herbal drinks, teas and espresso as well as traditional drinks such as milkshakes, malts and smoothies. The business offers a wide range of free classes to the community as well as free math, physics and chemistry tutoring.

- Monsanto's Soda Springs phosphorus manufacturing plant was recognized for his environmental land restoration by Tony Hardesty, director of Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, on behalf of the six federal and state agencies most responsible for protecting the environment.

Bannock County

- Portneuf Medical Center's Heart and Vascular Center received the top marks in Idaho from Health-Grades, an organization that conducts an annual evaluation of 5,000 hospitals in the United States. The center was praised for its interventional program, which includes angioplasty and the use of stents to alleviate blockages.
- To expedite construction of a new hospital, Portneuf Medical Center executives agreed to sell a long-term care unit to California-based Ensign Group. The sale will shorten construction time by nearly three years because of improved profitability and increased ability to issue bonds.
- The city of Pocatello is pursuing foreign trade zone designations for several areas. Companies operating in a foreign trade zone are granted relief on tariffs charges and may defer payment of duty charges until the end product is sent to market. Additionally, companies that import raw goods and ship finished products overseas can bypass paying duties entirely.
- Local mayors, legislators and community leaders celebrated AMI Semiconductor's 40th anniversary and 36 years in Pocatello. President Christine King touted the company's workers as its most valuable asset. She reinforced the notion of a strong work ethic and company loyalty by recognizing that 25 percent of the AMI's employees have worked at the facility for at least 20 years.
- American Out Buildings is a new company filling a demand for functional, quality sheds and outbuildings. The business is owned by Jude Walsh and Mike Gunn and is located in Pocatello.

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